

Natural Resources

A Dynamic Ecological Setting

A variety of naturally occurring factors influence the complex mosaic of habitats at Sandia, New Mexico. The wide diversity of plants and animals are influenced by factors such as elevation, season, daily temperature variability, soil type and slope orientation.

Sandia and surrounding areas vary in elevation from 5,200 feet to a high point of 7,715 feet, capturing four distinctive life zones within its boundaries.

Desert Grassland is the lowest-lying life zone and represents the largest percentage of land area. Above the Grassland is the Juniper life zone, ranging from approximately 5,600 feet to 6,200 feet in elevation. The Pinon-Juniper zone rises above this to approximately 7,500 feet, and is topped by the higher elevation Ponderosa Pine life zone. Each life zone has an array of plants and animals.

limited planned benefit biological resources at Sandia.

Everyday Interactions With Wildlife at Sandia

Sandia property is bordered by Albuquerque to the north, with mostly open lands adjacent to the remaining south, east and west sides of Sandia, so wildlife is easily able to move onto Sandia property. With increasing land development in the western United States, wildlife gravitates to large areas of open and lesser developed lands such as those comprising Sandia and surrounding areas.

Sandia personnel regularly encounter animals near buildings and on roads. Most frequently encountered are birds, small mammals and reptiles. All of these animal groups play critical roles in the maintenance of healthy ecosystems.



Mule Deer



Fendler Hedgehog Cactus



Lark Sparrow



Mountain Lions

Biodiversity

More than 267 plant species and 286 animal species occur at Sandia and surrounding areas. This diversity is due, in part, to a variety of habitats such as cliff faces, caves, abandoned mines, and drainages. Restricted access and



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What You Can Do to Help Wildlife and Plants

Slow Down for Animals

In the spring reptiles wake up from their long winter sleep and remain active throughout the summer. Lizards, horned toads and snakes need heat to regulate their body temperature, and are often found warming themselves on roads from late morning until after dusk. Highly camouflaged to hide from predators, they are very difficult to see while driving.

The populations of many reptile species are declining due to habitat reduction and habitat fragmentation. More and more reptiles are State and/or Federally protected due to significant population declines.

Reptiles are an important part of a healthy ecosystem: rattlesnakes prey on rodents, keeping the populations naturally in check so that the rodents do not cause crop damage or spread disease such as hantavirus; and lizards regulate insect populations, preventing plant defoliation and insect-carried diseases.

Please drive slowly on warm paved and dirt roads to keep a careful eye out for these small animals.

Nesting Birds

When the weather warms up in the spring and the birds are singing, this means that birds are ready to start nesting here at Sandia.

Bird nesting can often be a nuisance, yet it is important to remember that it is illegal to remove a nest. Most birds, nests, eggs,

and fledglings are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Please do not disturb or remove any nests from your work areas. If you do encounter a nesting bird in your work area, please call Telecon (844-4571).

Please Don't Feed Me

When employees put out food for wildlife, this encourages our furry friends to build homes near our work areas. The entrances to their burrows may lead to slips, trips, and falls; and their predators, such as rattlesnakes, may follow to our work areas.

It is easy to unintentionally invite animals to work areas. Keeping food and refuse properly contained helps animals to stay wild and not become habituated to humans. Please don't encourage wildlife into work areas by feeding them.



Please contact Stephanie Salinas, ssalina@sandia.gov for assistance with any wildlife issues or concerns.



Sandia is a multiprogram laboratory operated by Sandia Corporation, a Lockheed Martin Company, for the United States Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration under contract DE-AC04-94AL85000.